

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 769

By Pitts

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Reverend Vernon Lee Hooks of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Reverend Vernon Lee Hooks, a humble servant of God who was senior pastor of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in Clarksville for more than thirty-five years; and

WHEREAS, truly an innovator, Reverend Hooks accomplished a great deal during his pastorate at New Hope, including the establishment of a Sunday morning radio broadcast ministry, recording ministry, and twenty-four-hour prayer line and the formation of a Mass choir; and

WHEREAS, under his inspired leadership, New Hope made many capital improvements to the church building, purchased land, vehicles, and musical instruments, became legal caretaker of Rossview Cemetery, and paid off the church's mortgage; and

WHEREAS, these many accomplishments aside, Pastor Hooks was heavenly proud of the church's tremendous increase in membership and the many souls who have been saved at New Hope; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Hooks's untimely demise leaves a gaping hole in the hearts of his New Hope Missionary Baptist Church congregation; he adored, appreciated, and loved each one of these Christians, and he was adored, appreciated, and loved by them in return; and

WHEREAS, the son of Leslie Jackson and Helen Louise Hooks, Vernon Lee Hooks was raised and nurtured by his grandparents, Robert and Lucy Hooks, Sr., as their own child; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Hooks especially loved and adored his grandmother, Mrs. Lucy Hooks, who called him "Man"; she pushed him to higher aspirations and correctly prophesized that he would become a great preacher; and

WHEREAS, Vernon Lee Hooks was baptized by Reverend M. L. Gabriel of Greater Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church in Lynch, Kentucky, and he later became a member of Friendship Baptist Church in Cumberland, Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, saved at an early age, Reverend Hooks soon became an active Sunday School teacher, superintendent, moderator, president, and choir member and was involved in many more church activities; his calling in life was made evident early on, and he was nicknamed “the preacher”; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school in Cumberland, Kentucky, in 1970, he relocated to Cleveland, Ohio, where he worked as an ambulance driver, therapeutic worker, and union representative; and

WHEREAS, he also joined Peace Missionary Baptist Church under the leadership of Reverend Daniel H. Black, Sr., and served as the coordinator of the Youth Ministries Program; and

WHEREAS, Vernon Lee Hooks was officially called into the ministry in 1974, licensed in 1975, and his dream of ordination was fulfilled in 1978 by Reverend Daniel H. Black, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, he moved to Nashville to attend the American Baptist Theological Seminary, from which he received a Bachelor of Biblical Studies in 1981; he was awarded a Master of Biblical Studies from David Lipscomb University in 2003; and

WHEREAS, he began his long and fruitful association with New Hope Missionary Baptist Church as assistant pastor in 1979 and then assumed the reins of leadership as senior pastor in September 1980; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Hooks worked in various capacities with the Tennessee Department of Human Services until his retirement in 2015; and

WHEREAS, he earned a Master of Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Kentucky in 2006 and was one of the first African Americans in the State of Tennessee to receive national certification in rehabilitation counseling; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Hooks possessed an effervescent sense of humor and was an active member and chaplain of the Eastern Kentucky Social Club, Tennessee Chapter, from its inception in 2004 until his passing; and

WHEREAS, this remarkable gentleman is survived by his daughters, Latonya (Eric) Jones and Katasha Buntin; grandchildren, Lerricka, Alayna, and Eric Jones and Tyler Justin Buntin; his siblings, Calvesta (Michael) Harris, Lana F. Montgomery-Pollard (Darrell), Janice Mike (William), John Leverett (Mattie), and Doris Leverett; uncle and aunt, Robert and Lula Hooks; uncle, Samuel Hooks; special cousins/aunts, Grace Robinson (Earl), Rosa Moxley, Juanita Roper (Ed), Bettye Reynolds (Edgar), Floretta James (Steve), and special cousin, Fred Wright (Gloria); cousins, Donna Hooks, Neal Hooks, Robert Hooks, Jr., Thelma Williams, Vondia Thompson (Rev. Arthur), Jerry Hooks (Terri), Barry Hooks, John Eric Holt, Bernard Hyshaw, Lawrence Howie (Robin), Maurice Howie, Marion Howie, Audrey Wright (Larry), Brenda Carroll (Ulysses), Frankie Mason, and Delores Preston; nieces and nephews, Richard Ellington (Odetta), Karen Williams, Marlene Harris, Roshonda Smith (Jonathan), John T. Leverett, Keiara Evans, Hazel Evans, Jaleisa Leverett, and Jameika Leverett; and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews, including “his favorite great-niece” as she was affectionately called, Hayley Smith; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Hooks was preceded in death by his parents, grandparents, brother, Erskine Williams, and nephew Larry Montgomery; and

WHEREAS, for thirty-five years, Reverend Hooks worked with purpose and commitment to fulfill God’s mission while faithfully serving the New Hope congregation; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the General Assembly remember the bountiful life of this exceptional man of faith and the singular legacy he has left behind; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Reverend Vernon Lee Hooks, reflecting fondly upon his lifetime commitment to God, his spiritual leadership at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, and his love for all of God’s children.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to Reverend Hooks’s family and congregation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.